

# INTENSIFYING CONSTRUCTIONS IN FRENCH-SPEAKING L2 LEARNERS OF ENGLISH: LONGITUDINAL RESULTS

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**Cognition**



**Education**



**Linguistics**



# Outline

## 1. Introduction

- Research project on *Content and Language Integrated Learning* in French-speaking Belgium
- PhD project on the acquisition of intensifying constructions

## 2. Research questions

## 3. Method

- Data collection
- Collostructional analysis

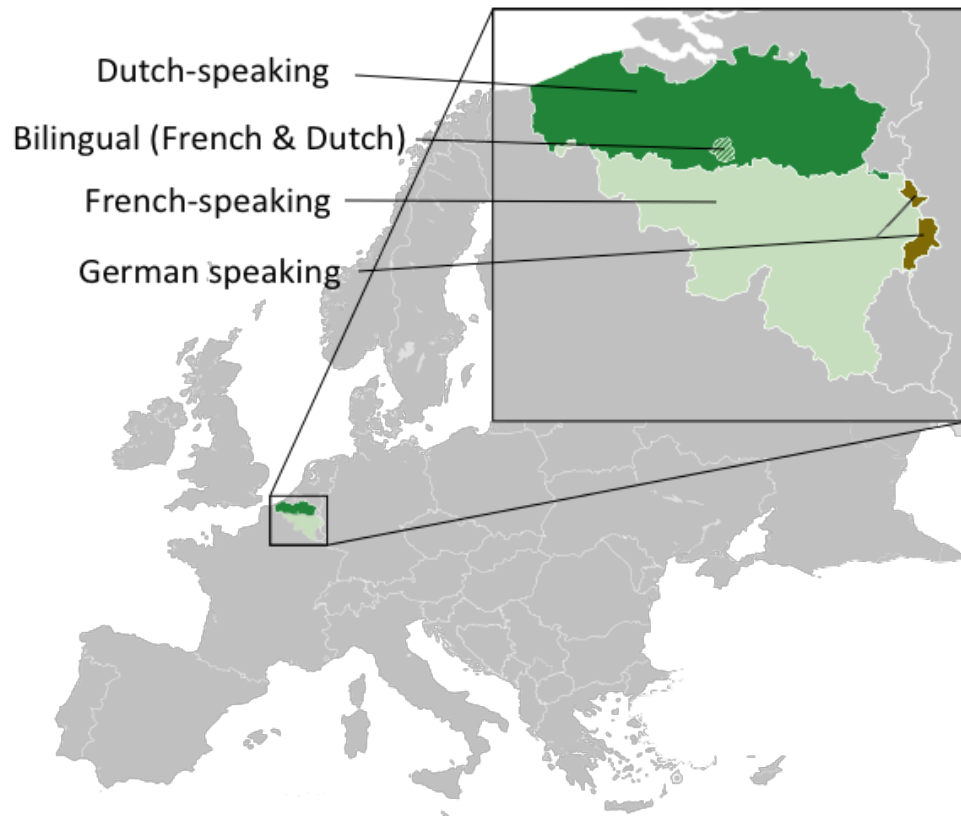
## 4. Results

## 5. Conclusions

# 1. INTRODUCTION

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# 1.1. CLIL in French-speaking Belgium



- CLIL promoted by the EU to foster multilingualism
- CLIL in French-speaking Belgium (8-13 h/week in target language, incl. FL class)

→ **More input of target language in CLIL than in traditional language learning settings**

# 1.2. Research project on CLIL (1)

- “Assessing Content and Language Integrated Learning: linguistic, cognitive and educational perspectives” (Hilgsmann et al. 2017)
- Research aim: Comparison foreign language learning of CLIL and non-CLIL learners:
  - What are the differences, if any?
  - For which linguistic aspects?
  - Impact of cognitive, socio-affective and educational factors?



## 1.2. Research project on CLIL (3)

### A large-scale and longitudinal study:

- 13 primary schools
- 9 secondary schools
- 928 pupils
- followed for two consecutive school years (2015-2016 and 2016-2017)

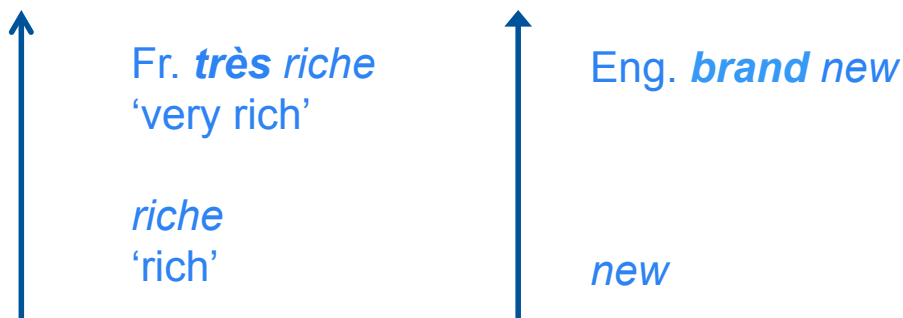


	CLIL Dutch	Non-CLIL Dutch	CLIL English	Non-CLIL English
Primary school pupils (455)	175	71	103	106
Secondary school pupils (473)	141	114	104	114

# 1.3. Research axis on the acquisition of intensifiers

- **Definition:**

- Intensifier: “a **scaling device**... which co-occurs with a gradable adjective” (Quirk et al. 1997: 445)
- Intensifier as amplifier – “upward scaling” (Lorenz 1999)



- **Intensifiers may be difficult to acquire by foreign language learners:**

- Wide variety of intensifiers, but language-specific preferences (Rainer 2015)
- Subject to rapid change (De Clerck & Colleman 2013; Foolen 2015; Lorenz 1999)
- Stylistic specialisation (Hoeksema 2012; Foolen, Wottrich & Zwets 2012)
- Abundant intensification in youth language (Lorenz 1999, De Decker & Vandekerckhove 2013)
- Not often subject to explicit instruction in foreign language teaching

## 1.4. A constructional approach

- Construction: form-meaning pair at phrase or word-level (cf. Hoffmann & Trousdale 2013; Booij 2010)
- Intensifying construction:  
[[X]<sub>INT</sub> [Y]<sub>ADJ</sub>]<sub>ADJ/AP</sub> ↔ ‘very Y’
- “learning words and learning grammar are really all part of the same developmental process” (Tomasello 2003: 42)

# 1.5. Intensifying constructions in English

**[[X]<sub>INT</sub> [Y]<sub>ADJ</sub>]<sub>ADJ/AP</sub>**

**[Adv + Adj]<sub>AP</sub>**

**[Adj Adj]<sub>AP</sub>**

**[as Adj as X]<sub>AP</sub>**

**[Adj+est]<sub>Adj</sub>  
[most Adj]<sub>AP</sub>**

**[Prefix +  
Adj]<sub>Adj</sub>**

**[N + Adj]<sub>Adj</sub>**

*very ill*

*big big*

*as fast as  
possible*

*most beautiful  
ever seen*

*hyper-  
sensitive*

*ice cold*

# 1.5. Intensifying constructions in French

**[[X]<sub>INT</sub> [Y]<sub>ADJ</sub>]<sub>ADJ/AP</sub>**

**[Adv + Adj]<sub>AP</sub>**

**[Adj Adj]<sub>AP</sub>**

**[Adj *comme* X]<sub>AP</sub> [*plus* Adj]<sub>AP</sub>**

**[Prefix +  
Adj]<sub>Adj</sub>**

**[N + Adj]<sub>Adj</sub>**

*très malade*  
'very ill'

*un monde fou  
fou fou*  
'a crazy crazy  
crazy world'

*fort comme un  
Turc*  
'strong like a  
Turkish  
person'

*meilleur de ma  
vie*  
'the best of my  
life'

*hyper-  
sensible*  
'hyper-  
sensitive'

# 2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

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## 2.1. Research questions (1)

1. Do **French-speaking pupils** encounter difficulties when they acquire **English intensifying constructions**?

- What are the **language-specific preferences** for intensifying constructions in English, in French and in the interlanguages?
- Do learners have difficulties related to **collocational specialization**?

2. Compared to non-CLIL learners, do French-speaking **CLIL-learners** of English develop a **more native-like** use of intensifiers due to more native input of English?

- Importance input for L2 acquisition (Ellis & Cadierno 2009; Goldberg 2010)

## 2.1. Research questions (2)

3. Which **developments** can we observe in the learners' use of intensifying constructions over the course of two school years?

# 3. METHOD

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## 3.1. Data collection

- 438 Belgian French-speaking secondary school learners of English or Dutch in CLIL and non-CLIL
  - Fifth grade secondary school (15-18,9 years mean age 16,5 years old)
  - Fall 2015, spring 2017
- 57 American English-speaking students at the University of Florida
  - 18-22 years (average age: 19,4 years)
  - Fall 2016

	French	English non-CLIL		English CLIL		Control group English
		T1 2015	T2 2017	T1 2015	T2 2017	
<b>Texts</b>	146	65	65	78	78	57
<b>Words</b>	51573	17229	18064	25630	24607	18760
<b>Average text length</b>	353,24	265,06	277,90	328,59	315,47	329,12

## 3.2. Collostructional analysis

- “the combination of a collexeme and a collostruct will be referred to as a *collostruction*” (Stefanowitsch and Gries 2003: 215)

### Collexeme ↔ Collostruct

- Collostructional analysis applied to SLA
  - Gries & Wulff 2005; Ellis & Ferreira-Junior 2009; Wulff & Gries 2011; Gilquin 2012; Gries 2012; Martinez-Garcia & Wulff 2012
- Covarying Collexeme Analysis
  - Gries 2007; Stefanowitsch 2013; Stefanowitsch & Gries 2005
  - "aims to identify pairs of words that occur with each other more or less frequently than expected in two slots of the same construction" (Stefanowitsch 2013: 223)

[[X]<sub>INT</sub> [Y]<sub>ADJ</sub>]<sub>ADJ/AP</sub> ↔ ‘very Y’

# 4. RESULTS

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# 4.1 GENERAL QUANTITATIVE TENDENCIES

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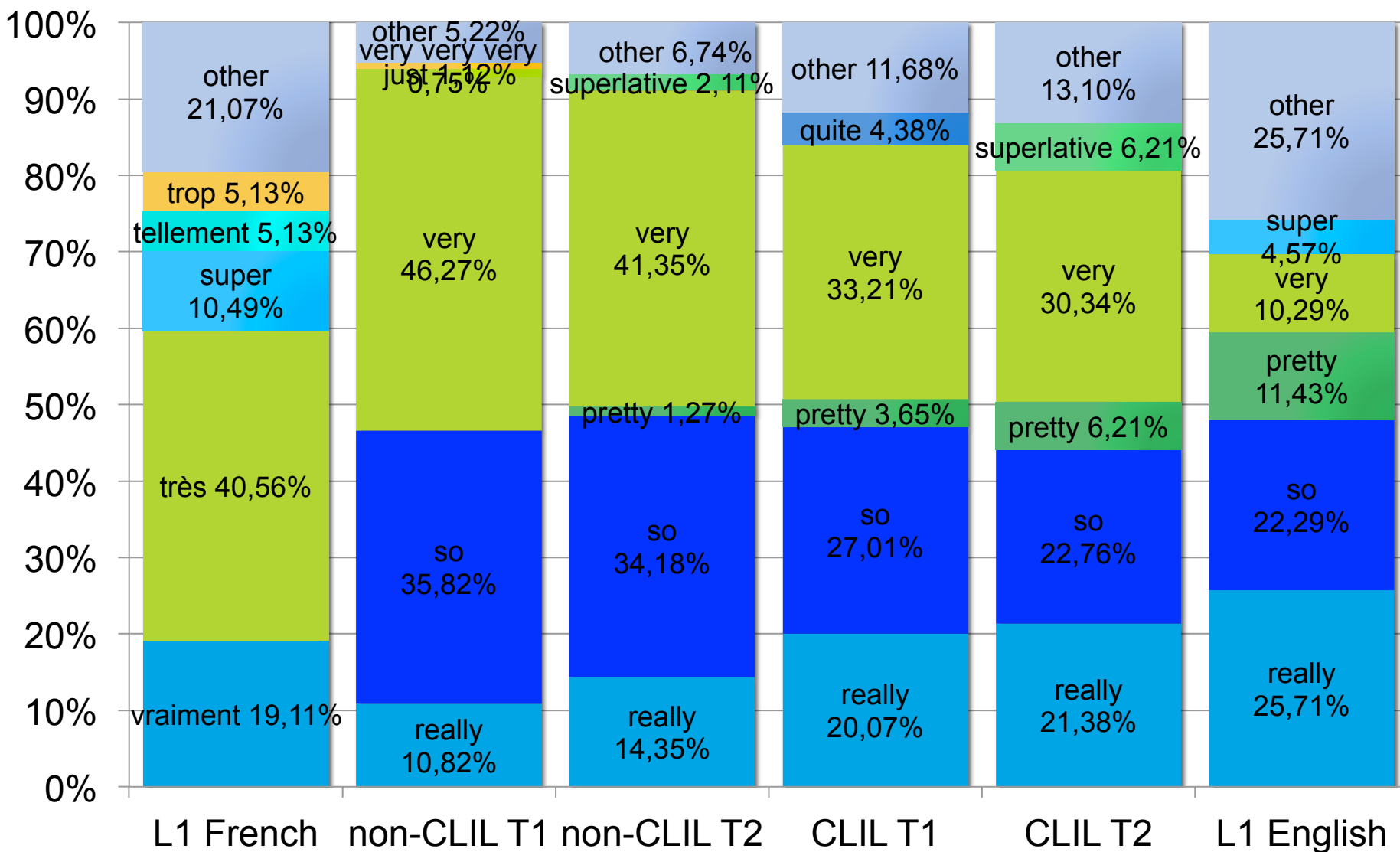
# Percentage intensified adjectives

	L1 French	Non-CLIL English		CLIL English		L1 English
		T1	T2	T1	T2	
Percentage intensified adjectives	429 15,69%	268 23,20%	237 22,15%	274 18,51%	289 19,50%	175 14,33%
Strong adjectives (without intensifier)	511 18,69%	171 14,81%	97 9,07%	136 9,19%	195 13,11%	118 9,66%

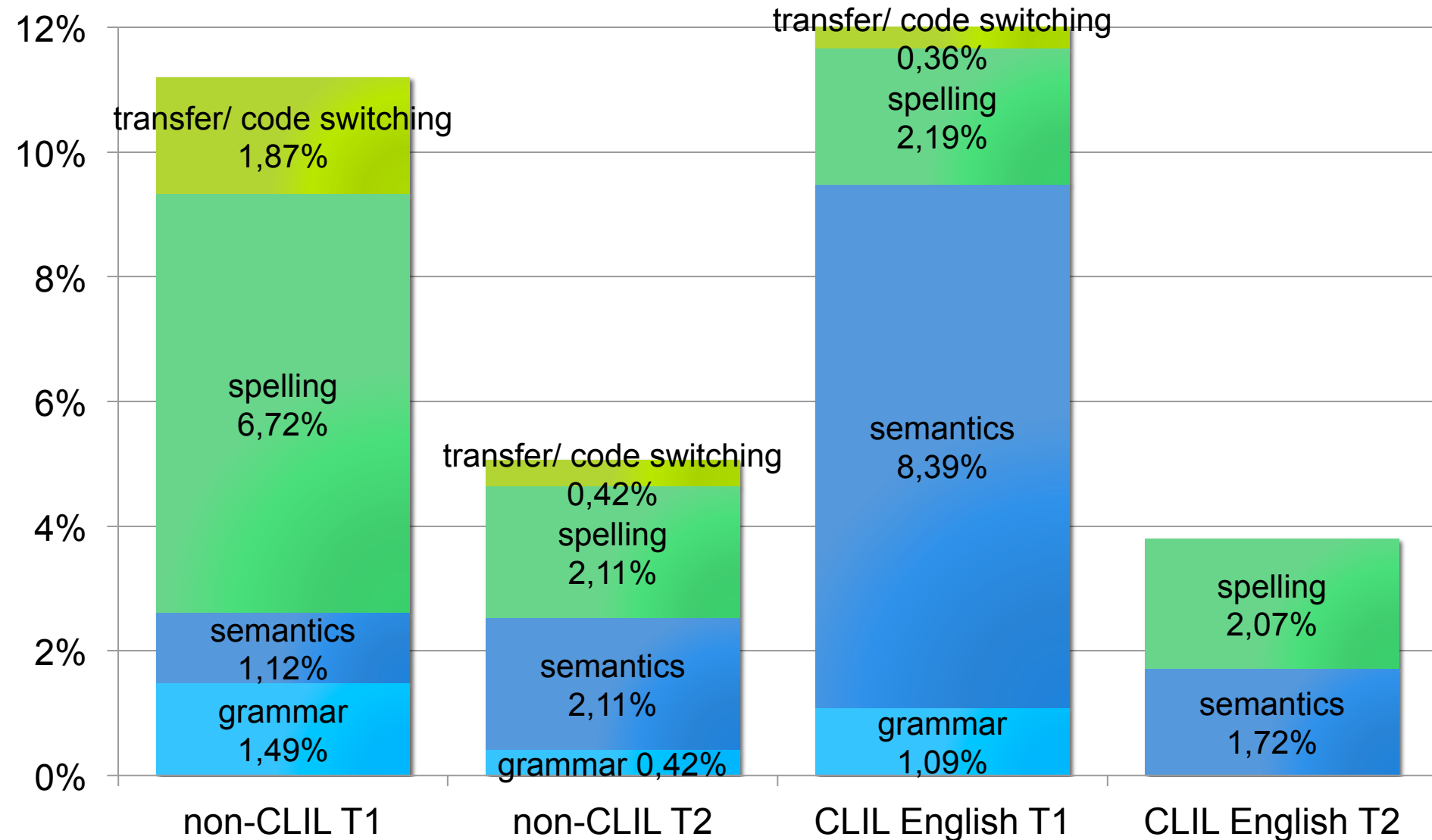
Overuse (all-round) intensifiers in L2 English (Granger 1998, Lorenz 1999; De Haan & van der Haagen 2012)

Learners' dense style – “an overcharge with ‘new’ elements, notably adjectives and their intensifiers” (Lorenz 1999: 209)

# Variety of intensifiers



# Types of mistakes



# Examples of mistakes

- Spelling mistakes
  - *The boat is huge and **so luxurious**.* (CLIL T1)
  - *I buy a **verry good** dessert.* (non-CLIL T2)
- Direct lexical transfer/code switching L1 (French) and other L2
  - *The member of personel are **very sympathique** and food is delicious!* (non-CLIL T1)
  - *The temperature it is **heel warm**.* (non-CLIL T2)
- Grammatical mistakes
  - *It was **such nice** holidays.* (CLIL T1)
  - *I didn't remember that Paris was **such beautiful**.* (non-CLIL T1)
  - *The moment the **most cute I never** see.* (CLIL T1)
- Semantic/collocational mistakes
  - *The BBQ was **too great** we had some fun with my parents.* (CLIL T1)
  - *The food was **amazingly delicious**.* (CLIL T1)

# 4.2 COLLOSTRUCTIONAL ANALYSIS

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# Collostructions

	Control English	CLIL English		Non-CLIL English		French
		T1	T2	T1	T2	
1	<i>all free</i>	<i>quite stupid</i>	<i>biggest</i>	<i>so delicious</i>	<i>biggest</i>	<i>tout bronzé</i>
2	<i>crystal clear</i>	<i>brand new</i>	<i>just insane</i>	<i>totally fine</i>	<i>very good</i>	<i>vraiment super</i>
3	<i>infinitely large</i>	<i>most influential</i>	<i>most beautiful ever</i>	<i>just beautiful</i>	<i>just amazing</i>	<i>aussi beau</i>
4	<i>simply content</i>	<i>most exciting of all</i>	<i>completely drunk</i>	<i>so funny</i>	<i>how wonderful</i>	<i>trop cool</i>
5	<i>undoubtedly fantastic</i>	<i>overly cranky</i>	<i>how amazing</i>	<i>best ever</i>	<i>seriously sick</i>	<i>juste magique</i>
6	<i>as blue the Pacific Ocean</i>	<i>purely organic</i>	<i>absolutely brilliant</i>	<i>pretty cold</i>	<i>truly spectacular</i>	<i>particulièrement réussi</i>
7	<i>overly fond</i>	<i>incredibly comfortable</i>	<i>agonisingly slow</i>	<i>so amazing</i>	<i>so delicious</i>	<i>plus rustique que ça, n'existe_pas</i>
8	<i>rather fond</i>	<i>totally broken</i>	<i>freaking awesome</i>	<i>big big</i>	<i>as surprising as it may sound</i>	<i>rouge de chaleur</i>
9	<i>such huge</i>	<i>totally exhausted</i>	<i>particularly negative</i>	<i>biggest I never see</i>	<i>heel warm</i>	<i>fort épicé</i>
10	<i>truly spectacular</i>	<i>really cool</i>	<i>greatest</i>	<i>really fantastic</i>	<i>pretty quiet</i>	<i>morts plein</i>

# L1 French

- Among 56 significant intensifying collocations
  - A wide variety of degree adverbs:
    - *très* 'very', *tout* 'all', *vraiment* 'really', *particulièrement* 'particularly', *énormément* 'enormously', *extrêmement* 'extremely', *totalelement* 'totally', *incroyablement* 'incredibly', etc.
  - Specific collocations:
    - *rouge de chaleur* 'lit. red of heat', *morts plein* 'dead drunk'
  - Complex intensifying constructions:
    - *vraiment très compliqué* 'really very complicated', *vraiment trop mignon* 'really too cute', *tout simplement génial* 'lit. all simply awesome', *hyper mega cool*
  - Superlatives expressing intensification:
    - *le plus incroyable de ma vie* 'the most incredible of my life', *plus rustique que ça, n'existe pas* 'more rustic than that does not exist'
  - Constructions of 'excess' expressing intensification:
    - *trop cool* 'too cool', *trop marrant* 'too funny', *plus que magique* 'more than magical'

# L1 English

- Among 36 significant intensifying collocations:
  - A wide variety of degree adverbs: *really, pretty, very, absolutely, quite, completely, incredibly, super, ...*
  - Superlatives expressing intensification: *funniest, most amazing*
  - Specific collocations: *crystal clear, infinitely large*
  - Creative language use: *blue as the Pacific Ocean*
  - Advanced vocabulary: *undoubtedly fantastic, how privileged, incredibly hectic*

# Non-CLIL English (T1)

- Among (only) 9 significant intensifying collocations:
  - Few degree adverbs: *so, just, pretty, totally*
  - Basic vocabulary: *so funny, just beautiful*
  - Adjective repetition to express intensification: *big big*
  - Grammatical misuse: *the biggest I never see*

# Non-CLIL English (T2)

- Among 18 significant intensifying collocations:
  - Variation in degree adverbs: *very, so, pretty, really, quite, just*
  - Basic vocabulary (*very good, really nice, very friendly*) and more advanced items (*how wonderful, truly spectacular, quite expensive*)
  - Superlatives expressing intensification: *biggest, worst ever, youngest*
  - Creative language use: *as surprising as it may sound*
  - Misuse (transfer from L1 and other L2): *the most amazing never spent, heel warm*

# CLIL English (T1)

- Among 28 significant intensifying collocations:
  - Variation degree adverbs: *so, very, really, totally, extremely, super, incredibly, amazingly, overly, ...*
  - Repetition of the intensifier: *very very tired*
  - Basic vocabulary (*very big, really cool, quite stupid*), but also more advanced items (*most influential, purely organic, totally exhausted*)
  - Superlative constructions: *most exciting of all, craziest ever*
  - Informal language use: *just awesome, pretty lame*
  - Specific collocations: *brand new*
  - Grammatical misuse: *best never*

# CLIL English (T2)

- Among 36 significant intensifying collocations:
  - Variation in degree adverbs: *very, really, so, pretty, quite, completely, absolutely, particularly, extremely, ...*
  - Advanced vocabulary: *agonisingly slow, extremely polluted*
  - Superlative constructions: *most beautiful ever, most amazing of the year*
  - Creative language use: *most horrible God must have shaped*
  - Informal language use: *completely stunning, just insane, freaking awesome*

# 5. CONCLUSIONS

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# Conclusion

- The results of our study suggest the following cline:

Non-CLIL (T1) > Non-CLIL (T2) > CLIL (T1) > CLIL (T2) > L1 ENG

- This cline is confirmed by:
  - more native-like use of degree adverbs (a.o. decreasing overuse of *very*)
  - the qualitative analysis of significant intensifying collocations

# Conclusion

- The colostruational analysis suggests an important impact of (longitudinal) CLIL input on the acquisition of more native-like intensification:
  - Variation in degree adverbs
  - Advanced vocabulary items
  - Specific collocations
  - Creative and informal language use

# Perspectives for future research

- Compare with students learning Dutch in (non-)CLIL
- Investigate how our results correlate with other variables involved in the project (general proficiency and phraseology, background, cognitive, socio-affective and educational variables)

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Grazie!  
Thank you!  
Bedankt!  
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